

**THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

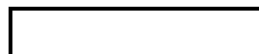
Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

21 January 1981

NOTE FOR: Hal Ford
Associate Chairman, National
Intelligence Council

Hal:

Would appreciate having your
reactions to the attached draft letter
to the Editor, Contra.



THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

NFAC 8104-80
15 December 1980

To the Editor of Contra,

I agree with H. H. Ransom ("Being Intelligent About Secret Intelligence Agencies," Contra, October 1980) that there is a need to better define the functions of intelligence en route to deriving a theory of intelligence. And it probably is true that an acceptable theory would permit improved evaluation of performance including whether or not policymakers have been properly forewarned.

Before greater progress can be made toward this goal, however, a fundamental consideration is whether or not the effort would be worth it. It would seem not to be if Mr. Ransom's "partly intuitive" hypotheses cannot be disproved at the outset, i.e., that a) intelligence systems tend to report what they think the political leadership wants to hear, and b) leaders often take action without regard to intelligence reports. As Mr. Ransom rightly points out, if these hypotheses represent reality then intelligence makes little difference in policy formulation. The benefits from serious study of the process therefore would be problematical.

My view is that both hypotheses, and especially the first, can be tested and would be disproven with an abundance of examples and other evidence. The hypotheses embody more fancy than fact. But a dispassionate assessment of the track record is warranted and is of enormous importance. It should be completed and presented in a satisfactory way to determine what has been the rule and the exception.

So onward with the development of a theory of intelligence . . . with an additional observation: the last purely intelligence-related step in the intelligence process would seem to be the receipt by the decisionmakers of evaluated information--descriptive, explanatory, or predictive. Conceptually, the use of intelligence in the policy decision process is believed by many intelligence officials and others to be a phenomenon occurring either after the intelligence process has run its course or parallel to it--perhaps both. Its importance in decisionmaking--indeed its "pivotal" role--is palpable. But is it not

NFAC 8104-80

more or less outside the realm of intelligence theory, not to mention the responsibilities of intelligence authorities?

Finally, the importance should not be discounted of a sagacious senior official who successfully eschews becoming an advocate of specific courses of action, in particular those ultimately resulting in adverse consequences. Not carrying the baggage of such choices seemingly would enhance the perceived impartiality of such an official. And this valuable trait would serve well in connection with the intelligence contribution to attempts that subsequently might be made at setting things right, or at least limiting damage.

Sincerely,

Deputy Special Assistant
for
Nuclear Proliferation Intelligence

STAT